

AN
ADDRESS



TO THE

INHABITANTS OF EUROPE

ON THE INIQUITY

OF THE

Slave Trade;

ISSUED BY THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, &c.
COMMONLY CALLED QUAKERS, IN GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND.

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AN ADDRESS, &c.

MANY years have now elapsed since the attention of the Religious Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers, was first turned to the subject of the Slave Trade. Such was the conviction of its iniquity, that it was felt to be a duty to represent to all in the same religious profession, the sufferings to which the natives of Africa were subjected, by being forcibly torn from their native soil, and condemned to cruel bondage on a foreign shore.

The Society proceeded further: under a sense of the enormity of the crime, a regulation was made upwards of sixty years ago, which has continued in force unto the present time, that those who persisted in "the unrighteous traffic in Negroes*", after pains had been taken to convince them of their error, should no longer be considered as its members. And as such as are in religious connexion with us, have been uniformly warned not to partake of the gain of oppression, not to defile themselves with any profits arising from this species of injustice, we trust that we shall obtain full credit when we allege, that we have no commercial or political end whatever to answer,

* Yearly Meeting, 1761.

by thus advocating the cause of the oppressed. We plead on the simple, but firm basis of Christian principle.

In common with many virtuous and benevolent characters of our own nation, we felt it to be a Christian duty, to aid in diffusing among our fellow-countrymen information on the horrors of the trade; and in soliciting our government to pass a law, for the termination of a commerce, at once barbarous and iniquitous. And we participated in feelings of joy on beholding that, notwithstanding there were great and numerous obstacles in the outset, and in the progress, of this work of humanity, the sense of the great bulk of the inhabitants of these islands was so clearly seen and yielded to by our Rulers, that this stain on our national character was ultimately effaced, in the year 1807, by an act of the British Legislature;—many of the members of which not only acknowledged the injustice of the trade, but nobly and successfully united their unwearied efforts to hasten its suppression.

We have rejoiced to hear that the respective Governments of those countries, whose subjects are still implicated in the traffic, have proceeded so far as they have hitherto done towards its abolition; but we have learned with deep regret and sorrow, that it is still pursued to a great and truly lamentable extent, and *that* under circumstances of aggravated cruelty, by the subjects of those very powers. We hear that

numerous vessels are still hovering along the shores of Africa, to procure cargoes of human beings, and transport them to distant lands, whence they are designed never to return. In fact we hear, and that from undoubted authority, that the trade which the Congress at Vienna in 1814 pronounced to be “the desolation of Africa, the degradation of Europe, and the afflicting scourge of humanity,” has been carried on with increased eagerness in the course of last year.

It is under the influence of Christian love and good-will, that we are now engaged to express our interest on behalf of this injured people. In thus introducing ourselves to the notice of our Continental neighbours, we feel that we need not offer any apology, considering them as our brethren, as the children of one universal Parent, as fellow-professors of a belief in one and the same merciful Saviour. The same feelings which lead us to consider the natives of France, of Spain, of Holland, of Portugal, and of the other nations of Europe, as our brethren, induce us to extend this endearing appellation to the inhabitants of Africa. Our heavenly Father has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth; and we are all the objects of that great redemption, which comes by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And although the kindreds of the earth are divided into distinct communi-

ties and nations, we are all bound one unto another by the ties of love, of brotherly kindness, and compassion. But the nations of Europe are united by an additional bond. To them has been granted a blessing, which has not hitherto been enjoyed by the greater part of the natives of Africa: this blessing, this invaluable treasure is the Bible, in which is contained the record of the Gospel of Christ.

Permit us then, as fellow-professors of the Christian name, to remind you of the complicated iniquity of the Slave Trade. Possessed of a superior force, which he has acquired by a greater knowledge of the dreadful arts of naval and military warfare, the Slave trader visits the coasts of unoffending Africa. He employs his agents to tear her inhabitants from their country, their families, and their friends; to burn their villages, and ravage their fields; to spread terror and desolation through their peaceful dwellings. He foment wars between neighbouring chieftains, in order to supply himself with their subjects, the victims of his avarice. Having thus either stolen or bought his fellow-men, who are equally with himself entitled to their liberty, and of which he possesses no right whatever to deprive them, he hurries them to the vessel that may be waiting in some adjoining creek, to receive the objects of his cruelty; or he chains them with iron fetters, or loads them with heavy yokes, and drives them like the beasts of the field to the shores. There

new distresses await them : they are violently conveyed on board the ships stationed to receive them, stowed beside each other like bales of goods, and conveyed across the Atlantic to the place of their destination. The horrors of this passage cannot be adequately described even by those who have been witnesses of them. Faint, then, must be the idea we can form of the situation of upwards of three hundred human beings, in a comparatively small vessel, each limited to so narrow a space, that it often happens they cannot lie on their backs. Here they are subjected to miserable reflections,—for the power of reflection in common with us they undoubtedly possess,—on the past, the present, and the future. Their shrieks, and cries, and groans, ought to be sufficient to excite pity in the hardest heart. Arbitrary, cruel power is often exercised to prevent those attempts at insurrection, to which their situation prompts them. And such is their state of desperation, that they are often ready to have recourse to suicide. The noxious and pestilential effluvia, that arise from their close confinement between decks, (which are often not more than three feet apart,) or from the illness of their companions, produce loss of appetite, disease, and in many instances suffocation, and other distressing forms of death. And here let us bear in mind, that these cruelties are practised in violation of the laws of many of the nations of Europe ; and that the Slave dealers in their

attempts to elude the operations of the law, have recourse to fresh acts of oppression to accomplish their wicked designs.

When released from their horrible prison, the surviving Slaves are exposed to sale like cattle, and consigned to pass their days in the loss of liberty, far separated from their nearest earthly ties, and exposed to such acts of domineering violence, as a capricious master or his dependents may be disposed to exercise. Such is the cruelty practised upon thousands and tens of thousands of innocent sufferers, not by men who might attempt to palliate their conduct on the plea of retaliating injuries; but by those who, when they themselves are enjoying the blessing of liberty, when the comforts of social life are within their reach, leave their native land for the sake of sordid gain, and spread desolation, distress, and misery, amongst a people who have never injured them. May the nations of Europe consider in time the awful consequences that await such accumulated guilt!

The arguments of the Christian, like the religion from which they are derived, are plain and simple, but they are in themselves invincible. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a system of peace, of love, of mercy, and of good-will. The Slave Trade is a system of fraud and rapine, of violence and cruelty. The Author of our Salvation, when he took upon him our nature, set us a perfect example of

piety and virtue. He went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men. He taught his disciples that the evil dispositions and passions of man are not to be indulged, but that they are to be restrained by the power of his Spirit acting upon the soul. His parables teach us the happy effects of a religious life. His miraculous cures bespeak a tender compassion for the sufferings and afflictions of man. His discourses inculcate disinterested, genuine humanity. The man who traffics in the lives and liberties of his fellow-beings, goes forth to gratify the malevolent passions of selfishness and avarice : he does violence to all the tender feelings of humanity, and spreads around him distress and terror. Our blessed Redeemer has taught us pure, impartial justice, in this plain but most important language, " All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*." The Slave trader, in open violation of this injunction, acts towards others in a way which he would use every means in his power to resist, if it were practised upon him. He is indeed guilty of the greatest injustice : he deprives his fellow-men of their liberty, that gift of heaven which is estimated as the greatest of civil blessings ; and which is the natural, and, (whilst we are not disturbing the peace and tranquillity of our neighbours,) the unalienable right of the whole human race. And here we would observe that

* Matt. vii. 12.

as the practice itself is clearly unjust, it cannot be warranted by any *commercial* considerations. That which is morally wrong cannot be politically right. And our beneficent Creator has wisely ordered, that our duty and our interest should be intimately combined; and it is contrary to his gracious purpose, that gain and advantage should be sought by one part of his rational creation, from the distress and sufferings of another.

It has been alleged by some that the natives of Africa are a race of beings inferior to ourselves.—If the intellectual powers of the present inhabitants of Europe are more vigorous than theirs, they should ever consider, with thankfulness, the means by which they have risen to their state of mental energy. If, in the inscrutable orderings of his Divine Providence, that Being who is all-powerful, and all-wise, has accelerated the diffusion of moral and religious knowledge through this quarter of the globe, are we not showing our ingratitude for the blessing bestowed upon *us*, by acts of cruelty and oppression to *them*? But is not their conduct under the sufferings to which they are subjected, a proof that they possess the common feelings of humanity? Our intercourse with them, and the authentic reports of travellers, clearly show that they are capable of kindness, sensibility, and gratitude; that they can make improvement in the arts of

agriculture and mechanics, and that they can adopt wise and just regulations for the good order of society.

It has also been maintained by some, that we are justified in forcing the inhabitants of Africa from their native soil, to make them acquainted with the blessings of *Christianity*. To these we would reply,—The Divine Founder of our religion used no endeavours to compel his hearers to accept his doctrine, or to obey his precepts. Even the Jews, who had been the peculiar objects of Almighty protection, who had, through many successive generations, partaken of the special care of God, were not to be forced to accept the blessings of the gospel. To them its promises were offered, and when by that nation they were rejected, the Saviour of the world, even when enumerating their sins and transgressions, so far from employing any compulsory power, pronounced this pathetic lamentation, “Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”* He is our Lord and Master : He is the great Head of the Christian church : his precepts and his examples are equally obligatory upon all his true disciples, in all ages and in all countries. If we follow them, in the meekness and lowliness which he taught, under the influence of his Spirit, we shall be happy here, and happy

* Matt. xxiii. 37.

hereafter : but if, bearing his name, and calling ourselves his disciples, even though we profess to be teaching his doctrine,—if we reject his example, and violate his precepts, in the presence of those who have not, like ourselves, been partakers of the outward knowledge of the gospel, awful and fearful will be our future condition.

The nations of Europe owe indeed a heavy debt to Africa. Instead of improving the opportunity of their commercial intercourse with that unoffending people, to exemplify the excellence of the Christian religion by the kindness of their conduct, and the purity of their morals ;—instead of endeavouring to convey to them a knowledge of those exalted views, of that increase of temporal happiness, which the spirit of Christianity produces, many of them have gone forth to plunder and to ravage, to spread desolation and terror, to practise injustice and cruelty in their most odious forms ; and thus have caused the name of Christ to be blasphemed among the gentiles through them.

We appeal to all who have felt that love of their country which is inherent in our nature ; who can appreciate the blessings and enjoyments of social life ; who can form an estimate of the endearing relation of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, of husband and wife. We entreat all to reflect on the vio-

lation of these feelings which is now practised on the Continent of Africa : to cultivate in their minds from day to day, and from year to year, sentiments of pity for these poor unhappy sufferers ;—to embrace every opportunity of advocating their cause among their neighbours, with Christian firmness and love ;—and to obtain ~~and diffuse correct information~~, on the nature and extent of the traffic, by every means in their power, and in such a way as becomes the subjects of a Christian government. The performance of acts of kindness and love to others is permitted by our great Creator, in his unmerited mercy, to bring an immediate reward ;—a reward of such intrinsic value, that it becomes a strong incentive to further deeds of beneficence and humanity. Surely then an attempt to rescue our fellow-men from the most cruel and distressing sufferings, is a pursuit worthy of our unwearied exertions, not only as our duty, but from the satisfaction which it may itself afford.

We hope that none will be disheartened from doing their utmost in this good cause, from the thought that their efforts will be of little avail. No one knows, let his station be ever so obscure, let his sphere of action be ever so limited, what may be the result of *his* persevering attempts in the cause of justice and mercy. Great events have often followed what appeared to be but small and unimportant beginnings. And we earnestly entreat those,

whose influence may be more extensive, to lose no time, to neglect no opportunity of pleading a cause, in which the happiness and comfort of an incalculable number of our fellow-men, are most deeply involved.

If the foregoing pages should be read by any who are employed in this cruel traffic, we would suggest to these a few reflections. We feel, whilst thus attempting to describe the miseries which you are inflicting, that *you* also are our brethren ;—and that although we view your actions with indignation and abhorrence, you are the objects of our tender pity. As we are believers in a future state of rewards and punishments, we would warn you in Christian love, of the awful termination of that course of wickedness which you are pursuing. Our Lord, our righteous Judge, declared, “ Bles-
sed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy * ; ”—what then will become of the un-merciful and cruel ? In the same most excellent discourse, he uttered this solemn sentence, “ With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. † ” What then will be the portion of those who have meted out cruelty, distress, and sorrow, to the innocent and unprotected ?

The voice of reason and justice, the voice of humanity and religion, proclaims, that the Slave Trade is an iniquity of the deepest die.

* Matt. v. 7. † Matt. vii. 2.

May then the friends of the abolition of this abominable traffic, wherever they are scattered, combine their efforts in this righteous cause;—may their energy and alacrity be in proportion to the enormity of the evil;—may their patience and perseverance be in proportion to the difficulties which they have to encounter; ~~and may the labours increase~~ until the trade be eradicated from the face of the earth!

May it please the Almighty Parent of the universe to hasten the period of its extirpation, and by this and other means to prepare for the coming of that day, when from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, his name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto his name, and a pure offering.*

SIGNED in, by order, and on behalf of the Yearly Meeting of the said Society, held in London, the 25th of the 5th mo. 1822, by

JOSIAH FORSTER,
Clerk to the Meeting this Year.

* Mal. i. 11.